

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:
Virginia

COUNTY:
Campbell

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Mount Athos

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: .5 mile south of James River; 1.9 miles northeast of Kelly;
.3 mile east of Route 726.

CITY OR TOWN: (Kelly vicinity) CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Fifth (W. C. Daniel)

STATE: Virginia CODE: 51 COUNTY: Campbell CODE: 031

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Public	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied	Yes:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> Restricted
<input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	unused land	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY Mr. W. H. Burruss, Jr.

OWNER'S NAME:
Burruss Land and Lumber Company

STREET AND NUMBER:
Allied Arts Building

CITY OR TOWN: Lynchburg STATE: Virginia CODE: 51

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Campbell County Court House

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Rustburg STATE: Virginia CODE: 51

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Archaeological Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1969 ☐ Federal ☒ State ☐ County ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:
221 Governor Street

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond STATE: Virginia CODE: 51

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Virginia

COUNTY: Campbell

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Mount Athos is located atop a steep ridge in Campbell County overlooking the rich bottom lands in a wide bend of the James River. The ridge rises about 400 feet above the river and from it can be obtained panoramic views of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the distant north and west, as well as the seven hills of Lynchburg several miles west. Originally cleared for farming, the top of the ridge was allowed to grow into timber in the present century. The timber was cut about a decade ago, and the ridge is now covered by an unsupervised growth of underbrush and young trees of various varieties. The house ruins are located at the most prominent point of the ridge's middle. The ground around them is covered by a thick blanket of periwinkle, and several remaining tree boxwoods and terraces sloping away from the ruins indicate former extensive gardens.

The ruins consist of rubble sandstone walls, approximately fifteen-feet high in varicolored shades of tan. The walls are about two-feet thick throughout and except for a relatively recent cave-in at the southeastern corner, they have deteriorated surprisingly little since the house burned nearly a hundred years ago. The house's outside dimensions are approximately 44' x 54'. An early drawing made before the fire shows that it had one story on a high basement and was covered by a hipped roof. The drawing also showed a tetra-style pedimented portico (probably with wooden columns) on the house's north-west front. From the ruins it is evident that the first-floor plan consisted of six rooms with a central passage and a fireplace in each room. The structure's most distinctive architectural feature is the octagonal-ended projection at each corner of the house's southeastern end. The rooms lighted by these projections were each heated by a chimney located in the southeastern wall, leaving no room for windows on that end of the house. Joist holes in that end wall indicate that the centered door there was reached by a simple wooden porch and stair. The remaining rooms were heated by two interior chimneys located on a lateral wall. These chimneys still stand about 25' high and are in a fairly good state of preservation. Vestiges of plaster remain on some portions of the walls and indentations for shelving can be seen in the plaster in one area. The other portions of the walls have an eight-inch ledge to carry the first-floor joists. Some unsupervised excavations have taken place in certain areas of the ruins, but most of the archaeological evidence appears undisturbed.

Near the house's southwest side is a large raised cistern; a second cistern, possibly an icehouse, is situated somewhat farther from the house to the southeast. Both of these large rectangular holes are quite deep and have thick stone linings. A stone chimney about 200 yards from the house's rear and another to the southwest containing first- and second-story hearths are all that remain of two substantial outbuildings; one of which was probably the schoolhouse referred to in early correspondence relating to the property. The graveyard of the Robertson family, enclosed by an ante-bellum cast-iron fence, is east of the house. Its stones have either been removed or are covered by a thick growth. The Lewis grave, originally a brick vault covered by a large marble slab which has since been removed, lies about a quarter mile from the house along the ridge to the northeast.

CCL

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian

☐ 16th Century

☐ 18th Century

☐ 20th Century

☐ 15th Century

☐ 17th Century

☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Aboriginal

☐ Education

☐ Political

☐ Urban Planning

☐ Prehistoric

☐ Engineering

☐ Religion/Phi-

☐ Other (Specify)

☐ Historic

☐ Industry

losophy

☐ Agriculture

☐ Invention

☐ Science

☒ Architecture

☐ Landscape

☐ Sculpture

☐ Art

Architecture

☐ Social/Human-

☐ Commerce

☐ Literature

itarian

☐ Communications

☐ Military

☐ Theater

☐ Conservation

☐ Music

☐ Transportation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mount Athos is a highly picturesque and enigmatic ruin dramatically sited atop a steep ridge overlooking the James River. When completed around 1800, it was one of the most prominent plantation houses in the region, and its commanding position gave it an especially monumental character. The mountain-top site, combined with the house's one-story plan, classical portico, and octagonal-ended projections, has led many to speculate that Thomas Jefferson was involved with its design since these features are characteristic of many of Jefferson's residential works, both executed and unexecuted. This speculation is supported by the assertion of Anne Montgomery Barksdale Bolling, granddaughter of the house's builder, who herself was raised at Mount Athos, that her grandfather, William J. Lewis, was a friend of Jefferson and that Jefferson supplied a design for the family house. Although no connection with Jefferson has yet been documented, it is not unreasonable to assume either a direct or indirect influence.

The Mount Athos plantation was originally part of a grant known as Buffalo Lick Plantation, patented about 1740 by John Bolling, Jr., and included lands on either side of the James River in what are now Amherst and Campbell Counties. Upon Bolling's death in 1757, the tract was inherited by his son Archibald who in 1796 sold it to William J. Lewis for 2,200 pounds. Lewis completed the stone plantation house around 1800 and renamed the place Mount Athos after the monastic peninsula in Greece. Lewis served in the state legislature and narrowly missed being elected governor. He also served in the Congressional session of 1817-1819.

In 1822 Lewis sold all his land other than that connected with the house and a mill at the bottom of the mountain to Judge John Robertson of Richmond, husband of Lewis's niece. The Robertsons inherited the remainder of the land at Lewis's death in 1828. Judge Robertson made Mount Athos his residence until his death in 1873; his widow as well as her only living son and his family continued to reside there until the house burned in 1876. An article appearing in the Lynchburg Daily Virginian January 15, 1876, described the fire:

The calamity occurred on Thursday night, and was the result of an accident. The fire caught in the roof and spread so rapidly that the work of destruction was soon completed. Besides the furniture the house contained a great many valuable paintings and a fine

(see continuation sheet #1)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet) #1

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(Number all entries)

8. SIGNIFICANCE

library. . . . It is sad to see an ancient abode of so much refinement, elegance, and hospitality thus swept away.

Although financial circumstances prevented the Robertsons from rebuilding the house within the walls, members of the family continued to live on the place until 1892. In that year it was sold to Henry Logan whose heirs split the plantation into several parcels.

Today, the ruins of this architecturally significant dwelling present a romantic and nostalgic scene. Efforts are underway by local preservation groups to secure the property and stabilize the walls against further deterioration.

CCL

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Destruction by Fire of the Late Judge Robertson's Residence," Lynchburg Daily Virginian, Lynchburg, Va., January 15, 1876.
 Dunn, William R., "Mount Athos: Where History and Progress Unite," The Iron Worker, Vol. 33, No. 3, Summer 1969, pp. 22-23.
 Wyndham Robertson Papers, University of Chicago.
 Unpublished selection in Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission files from James S. Patton, Gay Mont, Rappahannock, Va.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	37 °	24	31 "	79 °	03	22 "	UTM: A 17/672050/4440 780 C 17/673400/4440 350 B 17/673370/4441 820 D 17/672080/4440 330		
NE	37 °	24	31 "	79 °	02	28 "			
SE	37 °	23	44 "	79 °	02	28 "			
SW	37 °	23	44 "	79 °	03	22 "			
APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 280 acres									
LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES									
STATE:	CODE		COUNTY:		CODE				
STATE:	CODE		COUNTY:		CODE				
STATE:	CODE		COUNTY:		CODE				
STATE:	CODE		COUNTY:		CODE				

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff		
ORGANIZATION Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission	DATE January 1975	
STREET AND NUMBER: 221 Governor Street		
CITY OR TOWN: Richmond	STATE Virginia	CODE 51

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name
 Junius R. Fishburne, Jr., Exec. Director
 Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
 Title _____

FEB 18 1975

Date _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

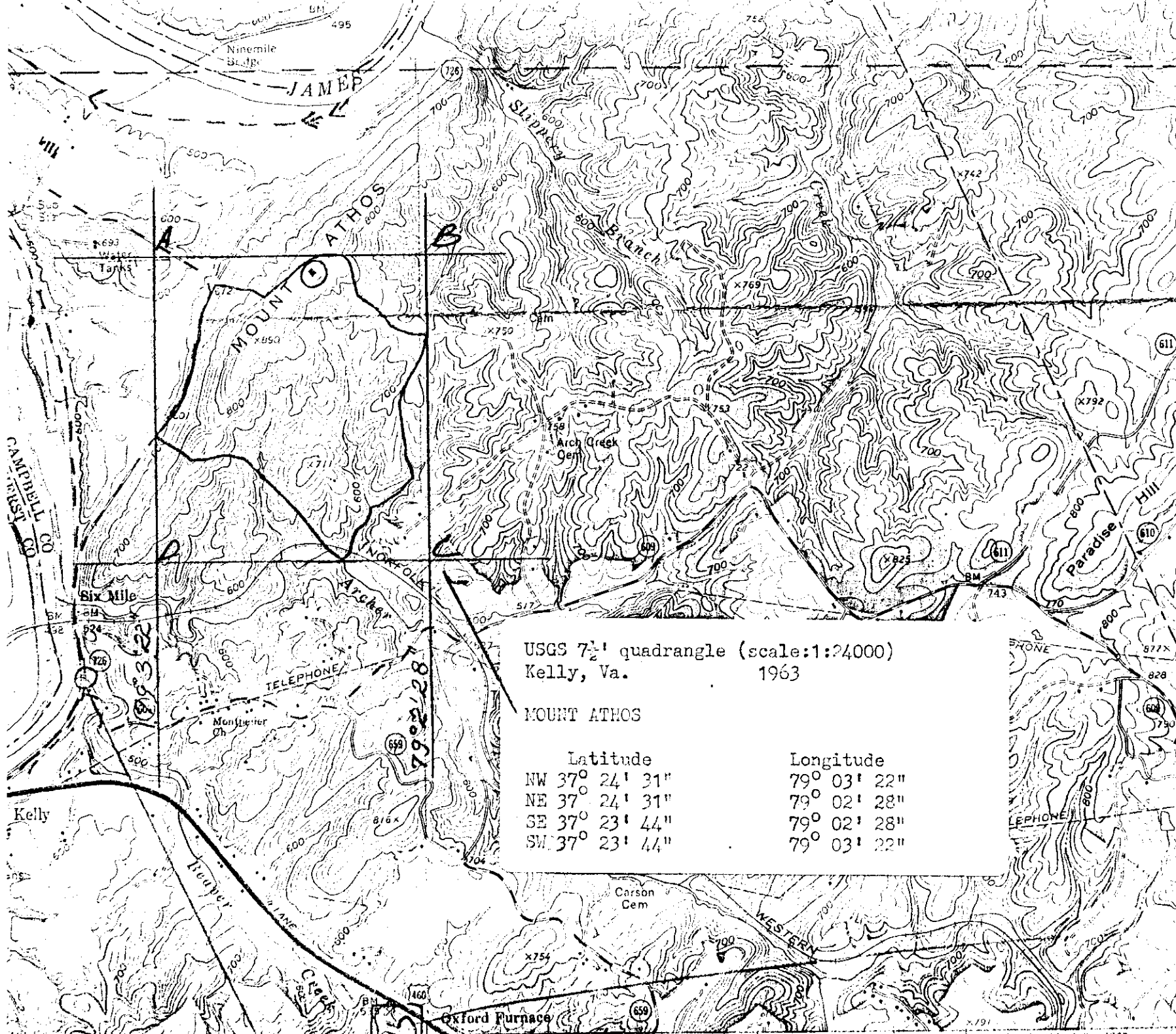
Date _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



USGS 7½' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)
Kelly, Va. 1963

MOUNT ATHOS

	Latitude	Longitude
NW	37° 24' 31"	79° 03' 22"
NE	37° 24' 31"	79° 02' 28"
SE	37° 23' 44"	79° 02' 28"
SW	37° 23' 44"	79° 03' 22"

BM in high

15-1

37° 24' 31"

37° 23' 44"

CONCORD 3 MI.

1390000m N.

ENTERED
map book
Ford
mace
15-2